# Marketing narratives tied to masculinity risk fuelling toxic manosphere culture, study warns



Mainstream marketing has long engaged in crafting narratives around masculinity, promoting ideals of success through wealth, power, and physical perfection. Iconic marketing slogans such as “Impossible is nothing” and “Fuel your ambition” have been pervasive, finding their way into various societal strata, from advertising on buses to endorsements by prominent athletes. These messages, originating not solely from the marketing sector but also stemming from the realms of entertainment and business, have consistently reinforced a highly aspirational image of what it means to be a successful man.

Saul Parker, co-founder and chief executive of The Good Side, recently spearheaded a mixed-methods research study for Movember, examining the intersection of influencer culture and masculinity, particularly among young men. Engaging over 3,000 participants from the UK, the US, and Australia, the study was released this week, revealing significant findings regarding the consequences of the so-called "manosphere" on male health and wellbeing.

The results indicate that the rhetoric of masculinity influencers has appropriated marketing strategies but distorted them to establish a potentially harmful ideology. The evolving narrative posits that to achieve success, men must continue to pursue wealth and physical prowess, now framed against perceived antagonists such as feminism and "wokeness." This new lens suggests that any failure is indicative of a world biased against men, encouraging a mentality of individualism and relentless pursuit of personal goals.

The manosphere exists where these toxic ideas flourish, presenting an appealing yet distorted vision of masculinity that can profoundly impact mental health. The report highlights alarming trends among young men, including increased incidences of poor mental health and a higher likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours, such as the use of steroids and performance-enhancing supplements. These findings underscore a fundamental concern: when brands propagate a narrow definition of masculinity tied strictly to external markers of success, they inadvertently cultivate a breeding ground for extremist viewpoints.

Parker suggests that a shift in narrative is critical. Instead of fixating exclusively on traditional symbols of success, there is a vital need for brands to explore a more inclusive portrayal of masculinity. This evolving narrative should encompass a wider spectrum of male identities, moving beyond stereotypes and superficial tropes. By doing so, brands can foster a more nuanced understanding of masculinity, highlighting values such as emotional intelligence and integrity alongside ambition and drive.

This call for change illustrates that the manosphere is not solely a cultural challenge—it signifies a marketing dilemma that warrants attention. Brands that aim to influence young men bear a responsibility to consider the broader implications of their messaging. The current landscape suggests that a collaborative effort towards reshaping the narrative around masculinity is essential, shifting from the dated paradigms of hyper-aspiration and individualism towards richer, more supportive frameworks that genuinely reflect the complexities of modern masculinity.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.warc.com/content/feed/positive-portrayals-of-men-in-ads-boost-brand-equity-and-sales/en-GB/10087> - This article discusses how campaigns with positive portrayals of men outperform in building brand equity and sales, aligning with the article's claim that marketing reinforces a highly aspirational image of successful masculinity.
* <https://www.marketingweek.com/brands-positive-portrayal-masculinity/> - This piece highlights that campaigns featuring progressive masculine portrayals are more likely to positively impact brand equity, supporting the article's assertion that marketing strategies have appropriated and distorted masculinity narratives.
* <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11199-024-01538-2> - This study examines how manfluencers in the manosphere influence young men's attitudes towards women, corroborating the article's point about the manosphere's impact on male health and wellbeing.
* <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/898059> - This article analyzes how advertising perpetuates hegemonic masculinity, reinforcing the article's claim that marketing has long crafted narratives around masculinity tied to wealth, power, and physical perfection.
* <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/202979> - This study explores representations of masculinity and femininity in advertising, supporting the article's discussion on how marketing reinforces a highly aspirational image of successful masculinity.
* <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1557988315617826> - This content analysis examines Twitter conversations during the Movember campaigns, highlighting how marketing strategies intersect with masculinity narratives, aligning with the article's focus on the influence of marketing on male health and wellbeing.
* <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/marketing-create-manosphere/1915632> - Please view link - unable to able to access data